

down to the well and state that the United States is the only major country which does not charge a Federal royalty for mining on government land. These same anti-mining critics want to add a 5 to 10 percent tax on all U.S. mineral production.

A recent survey was conducted on 17 major mining countries that compete with the United States. These 17 countries account for about 85 percent of all metal and minerals produced by the free world market economy. The average royalty they pay in these 17 countries surveyed was just under 1 percent, that is right, less than 1 percent.

Mr. Speaker, the United States must remain competitive internationally, and these proposed changes to the mining law would not allow us to do so. The United States is already a net importer of most minerals. Why is it that we are so worried about the trade deficit, and here we are talking about potential legislation that would render us completely dependent upon foreign nations for necessary goods and minerals that could be produced right here at home?

Mr. Speaker, Congress would be wise to encourage mineral development to offset the trade deficit and our dependence on foreign countries. In the meantime, this would create jobs, thereby increasing tax revenues and lowering social costs to the government.

SHOULD A GYMNASIUM FOR THE U.S. MILITARY ACADEMY AT WEST POINT COST \$85 MILLION?

(Mr. COBLE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, the Army has requested an \$85 million construction project for a gymnasium at the United States Military Academy at West Point. Apparently the showers are to be gold-plated, since the average cost for a military physical fitness facility is \$7 million. This request is outrageous.

I am advised that the Army has requested no family housing construction, yet an \$85 million gym enjoys priority status.

Only last week the Republican tax package emphasized the significance of taxpayers retaining more of their hard-earned money. This approach emphasizes compassion and common sense, while the Army struts front and center demanding an \$85 million gymnasium.

The time has come, Mr. Speaker, for all of us to redirect our priorities and practice prudence in lieu of recklessness.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). Pursuant to the provisions of clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair announces that it will postpone further proceedings today on each motion to

suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Such rollcall votes, if postponed, will be taken later today.

LAKE OCONEE LAND EXCHANGE ACT

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 604) to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to complete a land exchange with Georgia Power Company.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 604

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Lake Oconee Land Exchange Act".

SEC. 2. LAKE OCONEE LAND EXCHANGE.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) DESCRIPTION OF THE BOUNDARY.—The term "description of the boundary" means the documents entitled "Description of the Boundary" dated September 6, 1996, prepared by the Forest Service and on file with the Secretary.

(2) EXCHANGE AGREEMENT.—The term "exchange agreement" means the agreement between Georgia Power Company and the Forest Service dated December 26, 1996, as amended on August 17, 1998, on file with the Secretary.

(3) GEORGIA POWER COMPANY.—The term "Georgia Power Company" means Georgia Power Company, a division of the Southern Company, a Georgia corporation, or its successors or assigns.

(4) SECRETARY.—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of Agriculture.

(b) LAND EXCHANGE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Simultaneously with conveyance by Georgia Power Company to the Secretary of all right, title, and interest in and to the land described in paragraph (2), the Secretary shall—

(A) convey to Georgia Power Company all right, title, and interest in and to the land described in paragraph (3), except as provided in the exchange agreement; and

(B) make a value equalization payment of \$23,250 to Georgia Power Company.

(2) LAND TO BE CONVEYED TO THE SECRETARY.—The land described in this paragraph is the land within or near the Chattahoochee National Forest and Oconee National Forest in the State of Georgia, comprising approximately 1,175.46 acres, described in the exchange agreement and the description of the boundary.

(3) LAND TO BE CONVEYED TO GEORGIA POWER COMPANY.—The land described in this paragraph is the land in the State of Georgia, comprising approximately 1,275.80 acres, described in the exchange agreement and the description of the boundary.

(c) PARTIAL REVOCATION OF WITHDRAWALS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The orders issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission under section 24 of the Federal Power Act (16 U.S.C. 818), authorizing Power Project Numbers 2413 and 2354, issued August 6, 1969, and October 1, 1996, respectively, are revoked insofar as the orders affect the land described in subsection (b)(3).

(2) NO ANNUAL CHARGE.—No interest conveyed to Georgia Power Company or easement right retained by Georgia Power Com-

pany under this section shall be subject to an annual charge for the purpose of compensating the United States for the use of its land for power purposes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE).

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of the Lake Oconee Land Exchange Act, which would enact a mutually beneficial exchange of land between the USDA Forest Service and the Georgia Power Company.

The exchange would result in consolidation and more efficient management of national forests, increased protection of wildlife and habitats, and improved recreational access for citizens.

The Forest Service will exchange Forest Service lands that lie under Lake Oconee behind Georgia Power's Wallace Dam on the Oconee River in northern Georgia, flood rights on contour strips around the lake, and two parcels in neighboring counties, in exchange for lands Georgia Power owns within the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests.

The exchange involves approximately 1,200 acres of Forest Service land for approximately 1,100 acres of Georgia Power land.

The exchange will allow the Forest Service to acquire one of two remaining non-Federal properties within congressionally designated wilderness areas in north Georgia. This tract is in the middle of the Rich Mountain Wilderness, and totally surrounded by other National Forest lands.

The vast majority of lands to be transferred by the Forest Service lie at the bottom of Lake Oconee and are not actively conveying any public benefit. The remainder of the properties being relinquished to Georgia Power is currently occupied by Georgia Power facilities in Rabun County. These properties are of minimal value to the National Forest, and would be more appropriately owned by Georgia Power.

The Forest Service, as detailed by the Forest Supervisor's Decision Memo, has determined that the transfer complies with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and is supportive of the bill.

In addition, 67 percent of the lands of Rabun County are currently part of the Chattahoochee National Forest. This concentrated ownership poses a considerable strain on the ad valorem tax base of Rabun County. Included within the land exchange is the conveyance to Georgia Power Company of over 145 acres of property in Rabun County that currently houses Georgia Power facilities. The divestment of this property will facilitate Rabun County and their problem with their limited tax base.